

International Business Strategy of Indonesian Ethnic Fast Food: A PESTLE Analysis for Ayam Geprek Sa'i Expansion into the United Arab Emirates

Gertha Maria Gultom¹, Bintang Corvi Diphda², Theofani Trudy³, Talitha Salsabila Putri G⁴, Putri Alyaa Safira⁵, Yoga Ramadhani⁶, Husniyatul Hafidzah⁷

^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7} Universitas Brawijaya, Malang, Indonesia

Email: gertbagultom13@gmail.com¹

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Abstract

Globalization has accelerated the movement of goods, services, and investments across borders, creating opportunities for Indonesian ethnic cuisine to enter international markets. Ayam Geprek Sa'i, a halal-based fast-food brand, represents one such potential expansion. This study aims to analyze the feasibility of expanding the brand into the United Arab Emirates (UAE) by analyzing macro-environmental factors through the PESTLE framework. A qualitative descriptive research design with a strategic case study approach was employed, utilizing high-fidelity secondary data from credible international instruments, including the World Bank's World Governance Indicators and the Corruption Perceptions Index. The findings reveal that the UAE offers a highly stable political environment, strong government effectiveness, and low corruption. Economically, it is a largely free market with high purchasing power and a robust network of more than 20 Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPAs), including one with Indonesia. Technological infrastructure is world-class, while social and legal dimensions require careful alignment with collectivist cultural values and mandatory halal certification policies. These results suggest that Indonesian SMEs should adopt a transnational strategy, balancing global operational standards with strong local responsiveness to religious norms. Future research is recommended to move beyond macro-level scanning by conducting empirical consumer perception studies to refine menu localization for the UAE's diverse expatriate population and also competitor analysis within the UAE market.

INTRODUCTION

The era of globalization has triggered an intensification of goods, services, and investment across national borders, creating a strategic gateway for the Indonesian culinary industry to compete globally (Alkharafi & Alsabah, 2025). As a nation endowed with vast gastronomic diversity, Indonesia possesses immense potential to introduce unique culinary products to the international stage (Solleh, 2015). This expansion is particularly relevant given the rising global demand for ethnic and fast-food varieties. One brand with significant prospects is Ayam Geprek Sa'I, a halal fast-food product combining crispy fried chicken with traditional Indonesian sambal. This brand represents a growing commodity that could leverage the international market's appetite for authentic, halal-certified Indonesian flavors.

Expanding into international markets, however, presents a complex practical problem regarding strategic destination selection. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is often identified as a prime candidate due to its stable economy and high per capita income. Yet, for an Indonesian brand like Ayam Geprek Sa'I, the challenge lies in navigating a foreign environment that is substantially different from its home market. Without a comprehensive assessment of the external

environment, businesses face the risk of strategic failure. Therefore, there is a critical need to analyze whether the UAE's specific market conditions truly align with the operational and cultural characteristics of Indonesian fast-food brands.

Recent studies in the field of international business expansion emphasize that the UAE is a highly attractive hub for the Food and Beverage (F&B) industry (Suwaidi, 2018). Scholars have noted that the UAE's status as a global logistics and tourism center in the Middle East provides a robust platform for halal-certified products. Furthermore, contemporary research highlights that the UAE's non-oil sector growth, particularly in retail and food services, creates a welcoming landscape for global brands (Ahmed dkk., 2024). These studies generally suggest that the high concentration of expatriates and a modernizing economy make the region a safe bet for international investors.

Despite these insights, recent literature often suffers several limitations. Most studies, such as those conducted by Ahmed et al. (2024) and Habbal (2023), predominantly focus on the success stories of large multinational corporations (MNCs) that possess vast resources for market entry or provide a generalized overview of the UAE's investment landscape. There is a noticeable lack of research specifically analyzing the expansion feasibility of middle-tier or SME culinary brands from Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia, attempting to penetrate the Middle Eastern market. By positioning Ayam Geprek Sa'i as a middle-tier brand, the analysis underscores the distinctive challenges of penetrating this region without the vast capital and resources available to global giants. While existing research acknowledges the role of government policy in attracting FDI, it often does not account for the specific macro-environmental factors that determine the feasibility of niche culinary expansion.

Hence, a significant gap exists between the general market attractiveness reported in recent studies and the empirical evaluation of investment viability for specific niche brands. Most importantly, only few prior studies have examined the feasibility of an Indonesian Sharia-based brand investing in the UAE. Consequently, to address this gap, this research will conduct a study to assess the feasibility of Ayam Geprek Sa'i's business expansion into the UAE with the question of: How the external macro-environmental factors in UAE shape international business expansion feasibility of Ayam Geprek Sa'i in UAE? To answer that question, this article employs the PESTLE framework to provide a comprehensive analysis of the feasibility of expansion, bridging the gap between Indonesian culinary production and the UAE's stringent institutional environment. Hence, this article will argue that UAE has a proper feasibility for international business expansion based on the PESTLE analysis of external macro-environmental factors in UAE.

Moreover, the PESTLE framework, as outlined by Belsare (2025), is a strategic analytical tool that categorizes external forces into six dimensions: Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental, providing a structured lens to assess the macro-environment. Political factors encompass government policies and stability; economic factors relate to market conditions and consumer purchasing power; social dimensions highlight societal values and preferences; technological aspects emphasize innovation and digitalization; legal factors concern regulatory compliance; and environmental considerations address sustainability and resource constraints (Belsare, 2025).

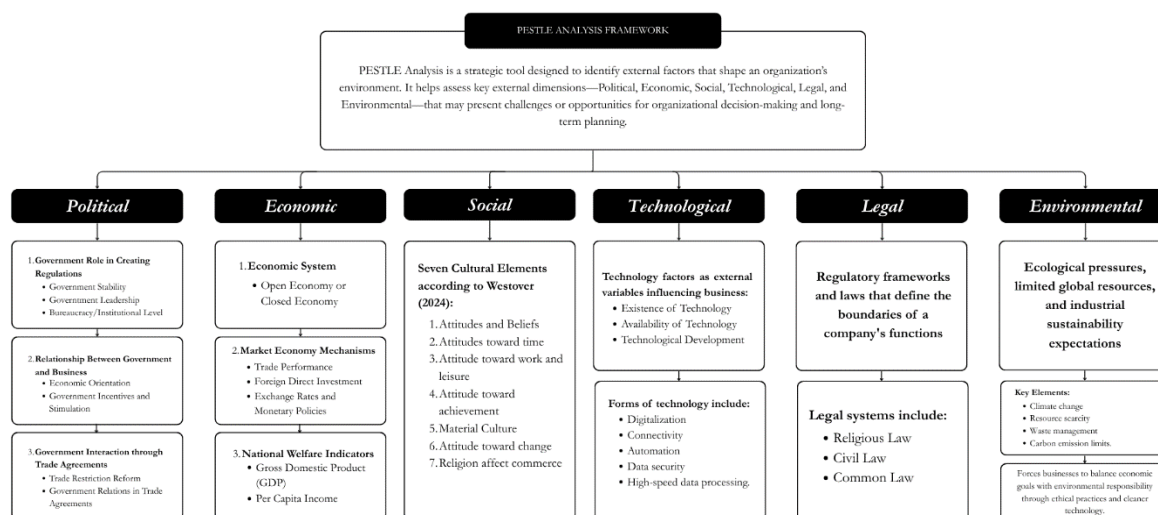


Figure 1.
PESTLE Analysis Framework

This framework, hence, rests on the premise that a firm’s success in international business expansion depends on its ability to align internal capabilities with complex, external macro-environmental factors in the host country. By systematically identifying opportunities and threats across these domains, therefore, the PESTLE framework is able to transform abstract environmental data into a concrete analysis of investment viability. In this study, the framework is applied to the specific case of Indonesian Sharia-compliant fast food brand, Ayam Geprek Sa’i, entering the highly competitive Middle Eastern market, thereby extending existing internationalization research and offering empirical evidence to assess the overall feasibility of expansion.

METHODS

The methodology of this research is designed as a qualitative study that utilizes a single case study approach to analyze the international business expansion feasibility of PT Ukhuwah Berkah Semesta, specifically its brand Ayam Geprek Sa’i, into the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Ayam Geprek Sa’i is selected as the primary case study for this research due to its proven operational maturity and its unique positioning as a Sharia-compliant Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) (Khasanah & Choiri, 2023; Mendocilla dkk., 2021). Managing over 300 branches across Indonesia, which demonstrates that the brand possesses a scalable business model and standardized operational systems that have been tested at a national level (Evaliana dkk., 2025; Mutmainah J, 2024).

Furthermore, the brand's core identity, which integrates authentic Indonesian ethnic flavors with strict adherence to Sharia principles, aligns strategically with the religious and cultural landscape of the United Arab Emirates (Zuhriyah dkk., 2023). As an Indonesian Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) seeking internationalization, PT Ukhuwah Berkah Semesta represents

a critical middle-tier entity that has been overlooked in existing literature, which often favors large multinational corporations (Sekar & Musjtari, 2021; Sifa' & Muctharom, 2023). Ayam Geprek Sa'i, therefore, serves as an important matter in which its business expansion feasibility needs to be analyzed in order to bridge Indonesian culinary production with the UAE's sophisticated institutional and halal standardization requirements.

Moreover, the time scope for the data analyzed primarily covers the ten-year period from 2015 to 2025, providing a longitudinal view of the UAE's economic recovery and rapid regulatory transformation. Ethical considerations are strictly maintained by using publicly available secondary data, thereby ensuring intellectual property integrity and adherence to academic transparency standards.

Moreover, the PESTLE framework, thus, is operationalized, specifically applied to the AGS case study, to identify how macro-environmental factors influence international business decisions. The political and legal dimensions are operationalized by mapping the UAE's high political stability and law reforms against the brand's need for direct operational control. Economic factors encompass the analysis of GNI per capita and net FDI inflows to determine market purchasing power and the investment climate for a mid-tier brand. Social factors are mapped through Westover's elements to analyze the alignment between AGS's Sharia-based model and local consumption habits. The technological dimension is assessed via the UAE's global leadership in mobile speeds and high-performance computing necessary for cloud-based POS and real-time delivery systems. Finally, the environmental factor examines the UAE's 2024 Climate Law to formulate supply chain resilience and mandatory waste management strategies.

The data analysis technique involves thematic analysis as derived from Braun and Clarke (2006) and Byrne (2021), where external environmental findings are organized into core themes based on the PESTLE dimensions and mapped against the internal capabilities of Ayam Geprek Sa'i. This process clarifies the recorded data types, ranging from political percentile ranks to specific legal requirements for mandatory halal compliance, into core themes derived from the PESTLE dimensions. These themes are then evaluated to identify the specific opportunities and threats within the UAE's external environment that directly impact the investment viability of Ayam Geprek Sa'i. The methodology remains concise yet adequate, avoiding excessive formulas while thoroughly describing the specific criteria used to validate the feasibility of the proposed international expansion. Furthermore, to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the study employs data triangulation by cross-referencing multiple high-fidelity secondary sources, comparing intergovernmental datasets from the World Bank and IMF with independent global indices such as Transparency International and the V-Dem Institute.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Political Factor

In analyzing the political factors of the UAE within the PESTLE framework, it becomes evident that the country offers a highly stable and supportive environment for international business expansion. Theories from Belsare (2025) emphasize that political stability, government effectiveness, and regulatory quality are critical determinants of market attractiveness, as they reduce uncertainty and provide a predictable setting for long-term investment.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) demonstrates a high level of political stability that has remained consistent over the long term. This is reflected in the Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism indicators within the World Governance Indicators (see Figure 2), which place the UAE in approximately the 70th percentile rank. This signifies that the risks of political

violence, coups, or armed conflicts in the UAE are classified as low. Such indicators illustrate that the domestic security situation is relatively well-maintained and free from significant shocks that could disrupt governmental processes. This stability mitigates the risks of supply chain disruptions and market volatility that typically arise from political uncertainty.

Indicator	Country	Year	Number of Sources	Governance (-2.5 to +2.5)	Percentile Rank	Standard Error
Regulatory Quality	United Arab Emirates	2013	9	0,77	74,41	0,20
		2018	9	0,92	79,52	0,20
		2023	8	1,04	82,08	0,22
Rule of Law	United Arab Emirates	2013	12	0,61	69,01	0,15
		2018	10	0,77	76,19	0,15
		2023	10	0,88	78,77	0,17
Control of Corruption	United Arab Emirates	2013	8	1,27	87,20	0,15
		2018	8	1,12	82,86	0,14
		2023	8	1,07	82,55	0,17

Indicator	Country	Year	Number of Sources	Governance (-2.5 to +2.5)	Percentile Rank	Standard Error
Voice and Accountability	United Arab Emirates	2013	11	-1,02	19,25	0,12
		2018	9	-1,12	17,96	0,14
		2023	8	-1,09	18,63	0,13
Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism	United Arab Emirates	2013	9	0,89	74,88	0,23
		2018	9	0,69	68,87	0,21
		2023	7	0,68	70,14	0,22
Government Effectiveness	United Arab Emirates	2013	8	1,19	83,41	0,21
		2018	8	1,43	90,48	0,21
		2023	7	1,60	95,28	0,26

Figure 2.
World Governance Indicator Uni Emirat Arab
Source: World Bank, 2024

Furthermore, the leadership capacity of the UAE government is recognized as among the best in the world, a fact reflected in the results of the 2025 Chandler Good Government Index (see Figure 3). The UAE ranks exceptionally high in the Leadership and Foresight pillar, indicating a clear and robust long-term vision from the government (Chandler Institute of Government, 2025). Leadership in the UAE is profoundly focused on developing future-oriented strategies, characterized by meticulous planning to drive economic growth and modernization.

This leadership strength is also reflected in the consistency and coordination of public policy implementation. The UAE government maintains policy sustainability through transparency and efficiency in resource management. High scores in the institutional indicators of the Chandler Good Government Index confirm that the UAE's government institutions function effectively and are capable of creating an environment conducive to investment and business expansion. With clear and purposeful leadership, coupled with robust institutions, the UAE offers stability and profitable opportunities for international companies seeking to develop their ventures within the country (Chandler Institute of Government, 2025).

Furthermore, the UAE government maintains a highly open orientation toward international business and trade. This is reflected in economic policies that prioritize market liberalization and ease of access for foreign investors (Crupi & Schilirò, 2023). The UAE has made significant efforts to cultivate an environment supportive of business activities by reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers, simplifying administrative procedures, and providing various incentives for companies seeking to operate within the country. Such policies have positioned the UAE as one of the nations with the highest levels of economic openness in the Middle East, establishing it as a global hub for international trade and investment (Al-Shayeb & Hatemi-J, 2016). This provides essential certainty for business actors intending to expand or invest in the UAE, as companies can plan their operations with confidence in the consistency of regulations and government policies that support the business sector.

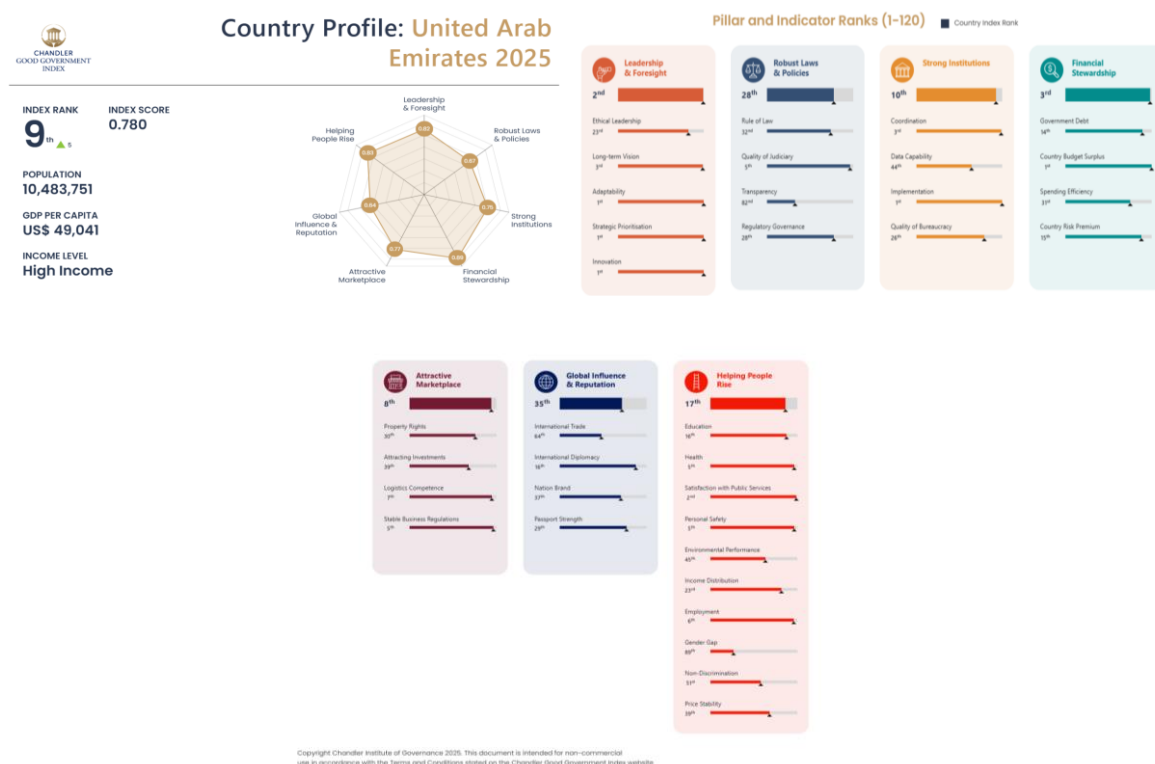


Figure 3.
Chandler Good Government Index UEA
Source: Chandler Institute of Government, 2025

The UAE government provides various forms of tangible support for the business world, particularly to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). One critical step is the liberalization of ownership for foreign investors in several sectors, including franchising, which was previously more restricted (Habbal, 2023). Additionally, the government has developed numerous free zones featuring flexible foreign ownership regulations, ready-to-use infrastructure, and one-stop-shop

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services for licensing. These policies demonstrate that the UAE is not only opening its market but is also actively designing policy instruments to make the nation more competitive in attracting global corporations.

Beyond ownership aspects, the UAE government provides a variety of fiscal incentives and administrative facilities aimed at reducing costs and entry barriers for investors. These incentives include tax exemptions or reductions for specific periods, ease of profit repatriation, and the simplification of business licensing procedures through a more integrated and digitalized system. This type of relationship between government and business creates a conducive climate for international business expansion, allowing foreign companies to design market entry strategies with lower regulatory risks and higher business certainty (Al-shawabkeh dkk., 2025).

The UAE has aggressively implemented trade restriction reforms in recent years as part of its strategy to reach a foreign trade target of AED 4 trillion by 2031 (Al Taffaq, 2019). These reforms are executed through deregulation policies and the easing of trade barriers, involving both tariff reductions and the simplification of trade procedures. Recent data indicate that by the end of 2024, the UAE's foreign trade value had reached approximately 75 percent of this target, with trade growth significantly exceeding the global average (Reuters, 2025). This indicates that the government's policies to ease trade barriers are yielding tangible results in driving the flow of goods and services. This reform policy is also manifested through a more comprehensive trade agreement instrument known as the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPA) (see Figure 4 and Table 1). Through CEPA, the UAE not only reduces or eliminates import duties but also mitigates various technical barriers to trade, improves market access, and accelerates investment flows into priority sectors (Ghuloom, 2025).

Global Distribution of the UAE's Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPAs)



Figure 4.
Global Distribution of the UAE's CEPAs
Source: Ghuloom, 2025

As of early 2025, the UAE has signed CEPAs with approximately 20 countries, including India, Indonesia, Türkiye, South Korea, Australia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and several other nations across Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Ghuloom, 2025). This network of agreements complements existing regional cooperation under the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) framework and underscores the UAE's orientation toward expanding economic integration beyond the Gulf region (Ismail & Ahmed, 2024). The nature of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPA) adopted by the UAE is relatively deeper than standard Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). These agreements do not merely focus on the elimination or reduction of tariffs and import duties but also prioritize the removal of technical barriers to trade, enhancing market access for UAE exporters, and accelerating investment in priority sectors.

According to recent analysis, the UAE's CEPA partners can be classified into two categories: Tier 1 and Tier 2 (see Table 1), based on their contribution to the UAE's total trade (Ghuloom, 2025). Countries such as India, Türkiye, Japan, Vietnam, and several other key partners are categorized as Tier 1 due to their significant trade shares. Meanwhile, Tier 2 partners remain vital as they contribute to the diversification of the trade portfolio and open new opportunities in previously untapped markets.

Country	Category	Share of UAE's Global Trade (2023)	Total Trade Value with the UAE (US\$ Billion - 2023)	Current Stage
India	Tier 1	7.62%	54.2	Signed
Türkiye	Tier 1	5.11%	36.4	Signed
Japan	Tier 1	2.44%	17.33	Under Negotiation
Vietnam	Tier 1	1.71%	12.17	Signed
Russian Federation	Tier 1	1.53%	10.88	Negotiations Concluded
Pakistan	Tier 1	1.12%	8	Under Negotiation
Thailand	Tier 1	0.98%	6.96	Under Negotiation
South Korea	Tier 1	0.83%	5.9	Signed
Malaysia	Tier 1	0.68%	4.87	Signed
Armenia	Tier 1	0.66%	4.73	Negotiations Concluded
Indonesia	Tier 1	0.65%	4.62	Signed
Brazil	Tier 1	0.62%	4.38	Under Negotiation
Australia	Tier 1	0.59%	4.2	Signed
Jordan	Tier 1	0.58%	4.16	Signed
Kazakhstan	Tier 1	0.54%	3.87	Negotiations Concluded
Kenya	Tier 2	0.44%	3.14	Signed
Congo-Brazzaville	Tier 2	0.42%	3	Negotiations Concluded
Kyrgyzstan	Tier 2	0.38%	2.7	Negotiations Concluded
Israel	Tier 2	0.33%	2.34	Signed
Philippines	Tier 2	0.16%	1.14	Under Negotiation
Morocco	Tier 2	0.14%	0.98	Negotiations Concluded
Bolivia	Tier 2	0.13%	0.928	Under Negotiation
New Zealand	Tier 2	0.11%	0.77	Signed
Ecuador	Tier 2	0.10%	0.68	Under Negotiation
Belarus	Tier 2	0.09%	0.673	Negotiations Concluded
Colombia	Tier 2	0.08%	0.55	Signed
Central African Republic	Tier 2	0.07%	0.53	Signed
Georgia	Tier 2	0.07%	0.52	Signed
Argentina	Tier 2	0.06%	0.45	Under Negotiation
Cambodia	Tier 2	0.06%	0.41	Signed
Ukraine	Tier 2	0.05%	0.38	Signed
Chile	Tier 2	0.04%	0.31	Signed
Paraguay	Tier 2	0.02%	0.176	Under Negotiation
Mauritius	Tier 2	0.02%	0.17	Signed
Serbia	Tier 2	0.02%	0.12	Signed
Costa Rica	Tier 2	0.01%	0.067	Signed
Uruguay	Tier 2	0.00%	0.03	Under Negotiation

Table 1.
Global Distribution of the UAE's CEPAs
Source: Ghuloom, 2025

This extensive CEPA network carries significant strategic implications for companies operating within the UAE. First, UAE-based companies can leverage tariff preferences and the reduction of trade barriers to export products to CEPA partner countries with lower costs and risks. Second, foreign companies that establish their production operations in the UAE can utilize the country as a strategic gateway to access the markets of CEPA partners. The high level of the UAE's involvement in trade agreements demonstrates that political factors function as an enabler for international business activities rather than an impediment. Consequently, this makes the UAE an attractive environment for business expansion, particularly for PT Ukhuwah Berkah Semesta in designing a long-term strategy for its Ayam Geprek Sa'i products.

B. Economic Factor

From the perspective of the PESTLE framework, economic factors are fundamental components that directly influence a company's operational costs, consumer purchasing power,

and the overall feasibility of business expansion (Belsare, 2025). In the case of the UAE, the economic landscape serves as a powerful catalyst for international business, characterized by high market openness and robust macroeconomic stability (Ben Naceur dkk., 2008). This is reflected in its exceptionally high intensity of international trade, where the value of non-oil trade in 2024 exceeded AED 2.8 trillion, representing approximately 139% of the GDP (Ministry of Economy, 2025). This trade is dominated by non-oil exports, which grew by 29.3 percent, with gold and jewelry serving as the primary commodities, positioning the UAE as a global gold trading hub. The UAE's standing as a global trade hub is further strengthened by its role as a re-export center for the African and South Asian regions.

In terms of economic sector structure, the UAE is currently undergoing a transition from an oil-dependent economy toward a knowledge-based economy. This strategy aligns with the We the UAE Vision 2031 agenda, which targets economic scaling through the strengthening of non-hydrocarbon sectors and the development of human resource capacity. Consequently, sector diversification has become a vital characteristic of the UAE's economic system as it seeks to reduce vulnerability to oil price fluctuations. This shift aligns with the theory that sustainable growth creates a dynamic environment where companies face increased demand and expansion opportunities.

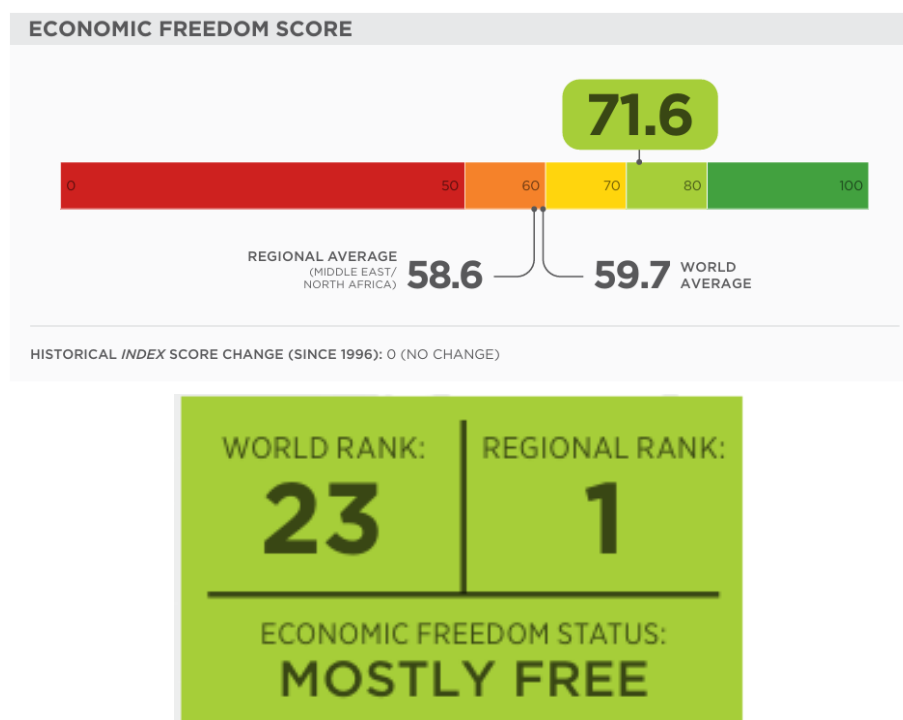


Figure 5.
UAE Economic Freedom Score
Source: Ghuloom, 2025

From a formal institutional perspective, the UAE is categorized among nations with high levels of economic freedom. The 2025 Index of Economic Freedom records a score of 71.6 (see Figure <https://ejournal.iainpalopo.ac.id/index.php/alkharaj>)

5), ranking the UAE 23rd out of 184 countries globally and 1st within the Middle East and North Africa region (The Heritage Foundation, 2025). Scores of 84.2 for business freedom and 78.4 for trade freedom indicate that business and trade regulations are designed to be relatively simple, transparent, and pro-market. Furthermore, a moderate tax burden and the absence of minimum capital requirements for business establishment further underscore a policy orientation that supports a market-based economic system.

Another important sphere emphasizes that exchange rates and monetary policies are critical determinants of the costs associated with importing materials and exporting products. The UAE maintains a fixed exchange rate regime by pegging the Dirham (AED) to the US Dollar. The Central Bank of the UAE adjusts its base interest rate following Federal Reserve policies, with the Base Rate standing at approximately 4.4% in 2025. This policy provides exchange rate certainty for business actors who frequently transact in dollars and helps maintain stability in borrowing costs. The liquidity level of the banking system is also remarkably high, reflected by the overnight interbank rate (DONIA), indicating a liquidity surplus of approximately AED 136.4 billion in 2025. These conditions demonstrate that financial market mechanisms are functioning effectively in channeling funds to the real sector.

Despite nominal stability, the UAE's Real Effective Exchange Rate (REER) experienced a depreciation of approximately 3.1% as of June 2025 compared to the previous year. This depreciation was primarily driven by lower domestic inflation relative to major trading partners, making the relative prices of UAE goods and services more competitive in international markets (World Bank, 2025). For business actors, this signifies an opportunity to increase exports and expand market share, though they must remain mindful of potential future exchange rate shifts that could affect profit margins.

A core tenet of economic analysis in PESTLE is the relationship between disposable income and consumer behavior. In this case, the nation's level of welfare in the UAE is reflected in its relatively strong and stable macroeconomic performance. Following a slowdown in 2023, real GDP growth returned to a range of 3.9 to 4.0% in 2024 and is projected to increase to approximately 4.8 to 4.9% in 2025. This growth is sustained by consistently positive household consumption, government spending, gross fixed investment, and strengthening exports of goods and services. The labor market conditions are equally supportive, with the employment rate of the working-age population ranging from 75 to 76.1% between 2022 and the 2025 projections, ensuring that the majority of the productive-age population is absorbed into economic activities (World Bank, 2025).

The UAE's macroeconomic stability is bolstered by a healthy external balance and fiscal position. The current account balance recorded a surplus of approximately 7.8% of GDP in 2024, while the fiscal balance showed a surplus of about 4.8% of GDP in the same year. The government debt-to-GDP ratio remains within the 28 to 30% range, providing ample fiscal space to support infrastructure spending and social programs (Ministry of Economy, 2025).

From an income perspective, the UAE's GNI per capita clearly places the nation within the very high-income category, directly controlling how much individuals can spend and their purchasing habits. Based on the Atlas method, GNI per capita ranged from approximately USD 41,000 to USD 49,500 between 2015 and 2024, with a sharp decline in 2020 due to the pandemic, <https://ejournal.iainpalopo.ac.id/index.php/alkharaj>

followed by a full recovery in 2023 and 2024. In Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) terms, GNI per capita ranges from approximately 65,000 to over 78,000 international dollars per capita, with an upward trend since 2021. This combination of high-income levels and rapid recovery demonstrates that global shocks, including the pandemic, have only a temporary impact on the average welfare of the UAE population (World Bank, 2024).

These conditions translate into concrete advantages for PT Ukhuwah Berkah Semesta's Ayam Geprek Sa'i, with high per-capita income and robust consumption implying strong purchasing power, trade openness and CEPA networks facilitating export and supply-chain strategies, and business-friendly regulations lowering entry barriers. At the same time, theory cautions firms to account for competitive intensity in a sophisticated market, compliance with high regulatory and quality standards, and the constraints of a currency peg on pricing flexibility. In sum, the UAE's economic factors create a strategically attractive but demanding environment that requires the firm to align its internal capabilities (cost structure, quality control, halal/Sharia compliance, and distribution strategy) with these external economic realities to realize sustainable international expansion.

C. Social Factor

Social-Cultural factors are critical because they define the unique characteristics that shape consumer behavior, market expectations, and the compatibility of a product with a local community. In the case of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the social landscape is a sophisticated blend of traditional Islamic values and a modern, globalized lifestyle, which directly impacts how businesses must adapt their strategies to ensure market acceptance. The first central cultural element in the UAE is the dimension of attitudes and beliefs. Emirati society is fundamentally rooted in collectivist values, prioritizing family loyalty, mutual assistance, and respect for elders over individual independence (Alteneiji, 2015). For a business like Ayam Geprek Sa'i, this suggests that marketing strategies should emphasize shared experiences and family-oriented dining.

The PESTLE framework also notes that societies have different attitudes toward time, affecting service delivery and consumer interaction. Attitudes toward time in the UAE reveal a divergence between long-term orientation at the national level and a short-term tendency at the societal level. While state institutions are highly future-oriented through long-term development strategies like UAE Vision 2021 and Abu Dhabi Vision 2030, indigenous society often maintains a shorter-term focus in daily life (Facchini dkk., 2020).

Regarding attitudes toward work and leisure, a unique social contract persists where citizens favor public sector employment for its superior benefits, even as women undergo a significant transformation from domestic to professional roles in high-level fields (Facchini dkk., 2020). This shift has fueled a flourishing leisure and coffee culture among the youth, signaling new consumption patterns for lifestyle products. Similarly, material culture reflects a fusion of heritage and modernity; while traditional attire like the dishdasha and abaya remain markers of national identity, they are increasingly used by younger generations as fashionable lifestyle expressions (Rahman dkk., 2021).

Attitudes toward achievement are heavily influenced by the state agenda to drive innovation and excellence. National leadership actively campaigns on the importance of being 'number one' in various fields and emphasizes that the younger generation must strive for the highest achievements. This narrative encourages entrepreneurship and innovation as solutions to reduce dependence on the public sector and to create a self-reliant, skilled workforce. For companies, this

translates to symbolic and policy support for business activities and innovation, even though a strong preference for job stability in the public sector remains at the individual level (Alfaqeeh dkk., 2019).

As the UAE transitioned rapidly into a global economic hub, attitudes toward change have become a balance of openness and apprehension. While the youth embrace new technologies and urban lifestyles, the fact that Emiratis constitute only 10% of the population drives a persistent concern regarding the preservation of cultural heritage (Rahman dkk., 2021). Finally, the last element is the influence of religion on economic activities. Islam is the official religion, and the government promotes a moderate form of Islam that opposes extremism while maintaining the importance of religious practices such as zakat and philanthropy as primary social institutions (Tahir, 2022). The constitution guarantees freedom of worship for non-Muslims, and the presence of numerous churches and other places of worship reinforces the UAE's image as a tolerant nation. In business practice, this necessitates strict adherence to Halal requirements for food and beverage products, sensitivity toward prayer times and the month of Ramadan, and the inclusion of religious and philanthropic institutions within the economic ecosystem. At the same time, some social entrepreneurship initiatives still face skepticism as they are perceived to potentially blur the lines between traditional charity and business practices, requiring entrepreneurs to design models that are transparent and aligned with local religious norms.

D. Technological Factor

Technological factors are pivotal in shaping international business operations as they directly influence productivity, efficiency, and a firm's overall capacity to innovate (Belsare, 2025). The theoretical material emphasizes that the presence of technology in a host country determines the basic infrastructure available to a company, affecting how smoothly business processes can operate. The competitive advantage of the UAE for multinational Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) operations can be examined through its digital foundation and technological regulatory framework, both of which are characterized by pro-innovation policies. The UAE government actively positions itself as a strategic regional actor in digitalization and robotics, providing a stable and predictable framework for international QSR investments, such as the planned expansion of Ayam Geprek Sa'i. Initiatives like the UAE AI Strategy 2031 represent a long-term commitment to integrating smart technologies across industries to bolster productivity.

The National AI Strategy 2031 serves as a blueprint placing the nation on a trajectory toward global AI leadership by 2031. This vision is supported by massive economic projections, targeting an output increase of AED 335 billion, realized through structured incentives and adoption mechanisms. The most prominent incentive mechanisms reflect the government's proactive role as both a catalyst and investor. These include direct financial support via 'Proof-of-Concept' grants in five priority sectors (Energy, Logistics, Tourism, Healthcare, and Cybersecurity) and the creation of an attractive commercial ecosystem for FDI through the AI Incentive Scheme for Overseas Companies (United Arab Emirates Minister of State For Artificial Intelligence Office, 2018). For comparative purposes, estimates by PwC—based on year-on-year productivity growth modeling from automation (0.3% to 2.2% compound annual growth)—suggest that AI will contribute AED 353 billion to the GDP by 2030, equivalent to 13.6% of the total GDP (United Arab Emirates Minister of State For Artificial Intelligence Office, 2018). The convergence of these figures across different methodologies reinforces the robust economic foundation underlying this strategy. For multinational QSR firms, this translates to an ecosystem supported by funding programs, grants, and technology accelerators.

The UAE's technological foundation is further stabilized by a credible telecommunications infrastructure capable of sustaining QSR business models that rely heavily on data and real-time

delivery. The UAE stands out globally, ranking first in mobile speeds and fourth in median fixed broadband speeds, reaching 328 Mbps (World Population Review, 2025). This high-speed connectivity is fundamental to modern QSR aspects, ranging from cloud-based Point of Sale (POS) systems to online ordering, real-time delivery tracking, and supply chain communication.

E. Legal Factor

The legal framework of the UAE serves as a complex yet structured environment that directly embodies the theoretical principles of the legal factor in a PESTLE analysis. Legal factors consist of the regulatory frameworks, laws, and requirements, such as consumer and labor laws, that define the boundaries of a company's functions and force strategic adjustments to ensure compliance (Belsare, 2025). In the actualization of its legal system, the UAE operates a dual legal system that combines Sharia and Civil Law on the Mainland with Common Law enclaves in specific free zones. Sharia principles (Islamic Law) play a vital role as one of the primary foundations of federal legislation. Sharia encompasses all aspects of human behavior and has historically governed commercial transactions. Although the UAE has adopted a codified civil law framework that largely controls commercial disputes, Sharia continues to play a vital role, particularly in the following areas: family and inheritance law, Islamic finance, and contract modernization (Ahmad, 2020).

Due to the application of this system, various business practices must undergo comprehensive adjustments to survive and compete in the UAE market. This is evident in UAE financial transactions, which fundamentally prohibit the imposition of interest (*riba*) and demand transparency in contracts to avoid excessive uncertainty (*gharar*). Business entities, particularly those in the financial sector, often voluntarily adopt ethical guidelines aligned with Sharia values to build trust, even if they do not operate as purely Islamic firms. This is coupled with contract implementation that must adhere to the obligation of good faith. When the principle of good faith is applied within the context of the Civil Code, where contract formation only requires agreement on essential elements, there is a risk that courts may interpret the parties' behavior beyond the strict text of the contract. Therefore, business actors are advised to ensure substantial and ethical compliance, rather than merely formal compliance, to mitigate the risk that their operational actions might later be deemed a breach of the good faith principle.

The implementation of Sharia law also impacts marketing attributes, which must meet certain mandatory standards, specifically mandatory Halal compliance. Imported or traded food, meat, poultry, and processed products in the UAE must comply with technical regulations and mandatory Halal standards. The Emirates Authority for Standardization and Metrology (ESMA) and the Dubai Municipality constitute the authoritative framework governing Halal certification (Government of United Arab Emirates, 2015). The certification process involves several stages, including application submission, supply chain traceability document reviews, on-site facility audits, and laboratory product testing to verify the absence of non-Halal contaminants (Government of United Arab Emirates, 2015).

In addition to the Sharia system, which indicates a religiously based legal system, the UAE Mainland operates a codified Civil Law system where federal laws passed by the parliament are the dominant source of law (Ghanem, 1990). Examples include the Commercial Transactions Law, the Labor Law, and various ministerial decrees regulating daily operations. The Federal Civil Courts are responsible for interpreting and applying these laws, and judicial precedents do not carry the same binding force as they do in Common Law systems (Ghanem, 1990).

In contrast, the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) and the Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM), which are financial free zones serving as independent legal jurisdictions, operate under a Common Law system within their enclaves. This system, based on judicial precedent, offers a

higher degree of certainty and familiarity for international investors and entities. The DIFC Courts, in particular, are renowned for their jurisdictional actualization in enforcing international arbitration awards and offering a robust dispute resolution framework. An optimal legal structure for QSR expansion must balance the certainty of Common Law within these enclaves, for non-operational aspects such as Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) ownership, regional financial contracts, or holding offices, with the necessity of interacting with the Federal Civil Courts on the Mainland for all daily operational disputes, such as QSR property leases, local vendor disputes, and Mainland employee labor issues.

F. Environmental Factor

The environmental factor serves as a complex strategic driver that forces businesses to balance aggressive economic growth with increasingly stringent sustainability mandates. According to the theoretical framework of the PESTLE analysis, environmental factors encompass ecological pressures, resource scarcity, and the growing industrial expectation for sustainable practices (Belsare, 2025).

In the UAE context, the environmental factor is characterized by a structural conflict between ambitious sustainability goals and the reality of energy-intensive industrialization. While the government has demonstrated a commitment to its Net Zero 2050 target and announced major renewable energy projects during its COP 28 presidency, current climate performance remains a challenge. This is corroborated by the UAE's 65th-place ranking in the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI), with a 'Very Low' rating in GHG Emissions, Energy Use, and Renewable Energy (CCPI, 2023). This structural conflict is driven by an economic growth model based on energy-intensive industrialization and consumption, evidenced by CO₂ emissions per capita reaching 21.36 tons, high energy intensity in commercial buildings, and the UAE's plans to increase its oil and gas production, which fundamentally hinders decarbonization. The gap between global ambition and domestic reality is exacerbated by the fact that only about 5% of the UAE's electricity is derived from renewable sources, alongside a lack of robust incentive policies, such as subsidies and tariffs, to drive efficiency and decarbonization within the industrial sector (CCPI, 2023).

The UAE government strategically employs top-down regulations to reallocate public resources or restrict their exploitation, for instance, through the ban on environmentally harmful products such as single-use plastics (Government of United Arab Emirates, 2018). These regulatory measures are the primary instruments for mitigating the risk of the tragedy of the global commons at the domestic level, indicating that Multinational Corporations (MNCs) cannot rely solely on voluntary initiatives to address public resource issues. Consequently, regulatory compliance is a mandatory strategy for companies to mitigate the risks associated with the tragedy of the global commons.

In response to these environmental challenges and as a manifestation of its global commitment to sustainable development, the UAE has integrated Sustainable Development Principles into its governance. This process began with embedding the SDGs into long-term national visions, such as Vision 2021 and Centennial 2071, ensuring cross-generational policy sustainability. Governance is executed through a 'whole-of-government' approach via the National Committee on SDGs, which aligns global targets with National Key Performance Indicators (NKPI) at both federal and emirate levels. These are implemented using sophisticated performance architectures, such as the Government Excellence Model (GEM) and Government Accelerators (UAE National Committee on SDGs, 2017). This policy is further strengthened by the launch of the Circular Economy Policy 2021-2031.

Furthermore, there has been a significant shift in the UAE business environment: the transition from voluntary initiatives to mandatory environmental reporting and mitigation. These obligations are enforced and supported by federal laws as a constitutional foundation. These regulations include (Government of United Arab Emirates, 2018): a) Federal Decree-Law No. 11 of 2024 (Climate Law): Mandates the measurement and reporting of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, carrying the risk of substantial fines for non-compliance; b) Mandatory ESG Reporting (ADX & DFM): Requires listed companies to ensure environmental transparency and accountability through mandatory annual reports; c) Federal Resolution No. 12 of 2018 (Integrated Waste Management): Regulates waste management from the production stage to final disposal and authorizes the prohibition of environmentally harmful single-use materials. The enactment of the Federal Climate Law transforms environmental risk from a reputational issue into a substantial financial and legal liability. National GHG reporting mandates compel Multinational Corporations (MNCs), regardless of their stock exchange listing status, to invest in data standardization, third-party verification, and consistent reporting.

In response to the environmental landscape in the UAE, MNCs in the F&B sector, particularly those operating in high-volume formats like Quick Service Restaurants (QSR), bear a significant ethical responsibility to address food waste. Business ethics in this context emphasize measures to internalize the social and environmental costs of waste. These measures must be accompanied by strategic and capital allocations focused on activities that fundamentally mitigate the risks of resource pressure and scarcity in the UAE. Given the high dependency on imports and water scarcity, priority should be given to developing or partnering with secure local supply chains.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research indicate that the macro-environmental landscape of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is highly conducive to the business expansion feasibility of Ayam Geprek Sa'i (AGS). The political and economic factors present the most significant opportunities, characterized by exceptional government stability, a high-income market with high purchasing power, and a strategic position as a global trade hub through an extensive network of Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPAs). Furthermore, the UAE's world-class technological infrastructure, ranking first globally in mobile speeds, provides a robust foundation for modern QSR operations such as real-time delivery and cloud-based systems. However, the social and legal dimensions introduce complex challenges; while the alignment with Islamic values is an opportunity, the collectivist nature of Emirati society and the stringent, mandatory Halal standardization under the Emirates Authority for Standardization and Metrology (ESMA) require meticulous strategic adaptation. Environmental factors also present a critical threat in the form of a 90% food import dependency and the strict penalties associated with the 2024 Federal Climate Law, transforming sustainability from a reputational concern into a substantial legal liability.

To navigate these factors effectively, it is recommended that PT Ukhuwah Berkah Semesta adopts a transnational strategy that balances global operational efficiency with high local responsiveness. This approach allows AGS to standardize core assets, such as its Sharia-based business model and signature recipes, while adapting service formats and menus to the diverse local and expatriate demographics. Regarding market entry, a multi-modal strategy is suggested: utilizing franchising to accelerate market penetration through mudharabah-based partnerships, while simultaneously employing greenfield investment to establish a proprietary central kitchen.

The central kitchen is vital for maintaining direct control over food safety, flavor consistency, and strict Halal traceability, which are essential for long-term viability in the UAE. Additionally, International Joint Ventures with local partners are recommended to mitigate financial risks and navigate the complexities of local bureaucracy and distribution networks. By integrating these strategic modes, AGS can leverage the UAE's liberalized foreign ownership laws while building a resilient and culturally aligned business ecosystem.

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